

Omori Katsuyama Stone Circle

More than a thousand stones have been arranged in 77 clusters to form a stone circle at the Omori Katsuyama archaeological site in Hirosaki, Aomori. The stone circle dates from 1000 BCE and is located on a plateau in the foothills of Mt. Iwaki. The mountain and the surrounding area are part of the Tsugaru Quasi-National Park, and visitors can enjoy scenic views from the archaeological site.

The approach

The site can be accessed by either a forested trail with steps or a gently sloping barrier-free path. The forested trail leads past chestnuts and other fruit-bearing trees. These types of trees would have provided sustenance to the prehistoric people that settled the area. Both routes open out onto a clearing with a view of Mt. Iwaki.

The stone circle is in the center of the clearing on an artificially constructed mound. From the center of the circle, there is a clear line of sight to Mt. Iwaki.

Mt. Iwaki and the position of the circle

Mt. Iwaki is a stratovolcano shaped similarly to Mt. Fuji, with even, gradually sloping sides. The mountain is worshipped locally and has a Shinto shrine at its peak. On the winter solstice, the sun sets behind the peak of the mountain in clear alignment with the stone circle. This implies that Mt. Iwaki held special significance to the prehistoric communities that lived in the area.

The stone circle as a site of worship

Archaeological discoveries consistent with findings at other ritual sites indicate that the stone circle was a place of worship. Stone staffs, disk-shaped stone objects, and clay figurines have been unearthed throughout the site.

Evidence of a pit dwelling

Towards the far end of the clearing, evidence of a circular pit dwelling with a diameter of 13 meters has been discovered. Due to the large size of the dwelling and the fact that it is the only one discovered at the site, archaeologists believe it would have served as a center for the communities that held rituals here.

Artifacts and related archaeological sites

Artifacts discovered around the Omori Katsuyama Stone Circle are exhibited in the foyer of the Susono District Physical Culture Exchange Center [\[link\]](#), a 10-minute drive from the site. Some are also displayed at the Hirosaki City Museum [\[link\]](#), alongside artifacts from other sites in the local area. Other ritual sites in northern Japan include the Komakino Stone Circle [\[link\]](#) (Aomori), the Isedotai Stone Circles [\[link\]](#) (Akita), and the Oyu Stone Circles [\[link\]](#) (Akita).